

Code-Switching in the EFL Classrooms at the Secondary Level of Bangladesh Open University: Learners' Perception

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Abstract: This research is undertaken at the Secondary Level of Bangladesh Open University (BOU). It attempts to present the frequency of Code-switching and students' perception towards it and their functions in facilitating EFL learning. Using questionnaires as a method of data collection, the findings reveal that instructors frequently code-switched between Bangla and English. This phenomena was related to both teachers' and students' language competence. Students exhibit positive perceptions towards it as a learning tool. Analyses of data reveal that Code-switching helps students to learn their lessons. Moreover, the students are welcoming code-switching very much.

Keywords: EFL, BOU, Code-switching (CS), Reasons for Code-switching, L1, L2.

INTRODUCTION

Code-switching (CS) requires an in depth assessment to be carried out in the country like Bangladesh as it is a general occurrence in Bangladeshi English learning circumstance. We need to think classroom Code-switching. It is a reality which cannot be ignore in a country like Bangladesh where English is taught as a foreign language. Masrahi [1] describes students' switches code when they do not get proper words to express and use alternative words what he or she knows well instead.

It is the consequential result of bilingualism. It is a means of communication where a speaker alternates between two or more languages during a single conversation. Code switching occurs at secondary level of BOU because here English is not a mother tongue rather it is taught here as a foreign language. Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is not an exception. Language use in the Bangladeshi classrooms has been characterized by code switching in order to accommodate the student's lack of competence in English.

In the EFL classrooms at the Secondary Level of Bangladesh Open University, both students and teachers switch their codes for the better communication of meaning. This study presents how the EFL students of BOU use the Code-switching of English and Bangla in the classroom. It is against this background that this research, seeks to observe the prevalence of CS in the EFL classrooms at the Secondary Level of Bangladesh Open University.

Objectives of the study

This paper aims to investigate the exercise of code switching at the Secondary Level of Bangladesh Open University. Thus, the objectives of this paper are:

- To investigate the frequency of Code-switching at the Secondary Level classrooms of Bangladesh Open University
- To explore the perceptions of the students towards Code-switching

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Bangladesh Code-switching happens within English and Bangla languages. CS is present in all classes and at all age levels in Bangladesh and BOU is not an exception. It is a kind of communication where speakers use two or more than two languages one after another in different situations. During conversation two or more than two language are used alternately. Gumperz [2] describes CS as a combination of speech alternatively used between two dissimilar grammatical structures and the alternation takes place in between two following sentences.

Brice [3] says, for limited English speaking students communication can be a barrier. It employs code switching what is occurred even in environments with fairly high frequency when English was declared to be the language of lessons.

Masrahi [1] describes CS as an excellent educational means as it assists students to learn well as they have complexities in understanding lecturers.

Zaman [4] says there are noteworthy numbers of students' in Bangladesh who switch codes with some other languages. It is happening because of social media like face book, imo, Viber etc. and media as they are very much active in social media, getting influenced by those. From his writing we get that learners have some sort of optimistic outlooks towards code switching and welcoming it with warm heart. They even do not think that it may have some negative impact indeed on the society rather they get the perception that code switching is like a bridge between two languages.

Cook [5] says teachers should stay away from the exercise of L1 completely and control its application in classroom management.

Suchana [6] studied about the code-switching of Bilinguals in Content Area Classrooms. In her work, she states that though using mother tongue is not encouraged at tertiary level in Bangladesh, as the target language is English; it is an undeniable truth that sometimes a few topics require the use of L1, especially when the topics are associated with socio cultural context. When conveying a message becomes the ultimate goal, switching may not be discouraged. Similarly, learners may be allowed to switch code, specifically when there is the question of clarification. If teachers and learners switch and mix languages only to bring out the actual meaning, then CS may have a positive impact in the overall learning process.

Lightbown [7] defines Code switching as the "organized use of two languages alternatively within a single discussion" while Romaine [8] defines Code switching as the "use of more than one language, variety, or style by a speaker within an utterance or discourse, or between different interlocutors or situations."

Azami, S. A. [9] states that code-switching occurs at sentence level, gives emphasis to movement from one language to another and approaches towards code-switching are dissimilar generation to generation.

Tariq, A. R., & Bilal, H. A. [10] investigated the functions of CS in the ESL classrooms of Pakistan. Findings and analyses of this study highlight that teachers do CS in different circumstances to assemble the demands of students as the communication gap push teachers to do so.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative field-based with specific attention to observations of one classroom, that is, English classroom of secondary level, BOU. 150 students of BOU were the participants of this study. All the student participants were Bengali native speakers and are studying at the Secondary Level of Bangladesh Open University (BOU). The research data were collected through observations and language utterances from the classroom. For this a survey was conducted to collect quantitative data. The researcher selected one particular course that is English both first paper and second paper because it required students to use English during lessons. The researcher was the primary means of data collection, interpretation and analysis.

A set of questionnaire had been used in this study to collect data. The students' questionnaire included nine open ended statements with four options. Study results have been presented contextually by using tables, charts and summary.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The participants were chosen based on their ability to provide opportunity to achieve the objectives of the research. 150 students were participated in this research. Table 1 presents participants English Language competence which is very important as it may be account for the instructor's behaviour in the classroom.

Students' English Language Competency

Table-1: Language Competency

Very Proficient	Proficient	Less Proficient
8%	15%	77%

Students' perceptions to the use of CS at the Secondary Level of Bangladesh Open University: analyses of questionnaire

Students' perceptions about teachers' CS

This part illustrates the outcomes from the analysis and findings of questionnaires. The result shows that the most of the participants have optimistic

perceptions towards the practice of CS at the SSC level classrooms of BOU. To the participants the use of CS in the classrooms is functional teaching and learning resource at the SSC level of BOU.

Switching of English (TL) and Bangla (L1) language is a common phenomenon in the EFL classrooms I have attended.

Table-2: CS is a common phenomenon

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
28%	66%	6%	0%

(Source: Survey work- Questionnaire analysis)

To explore the drawbacks of CS, we need to know their frequency in the EFL classrooms first. From table 2, it is found that CS is a common phenomenon in

the EFL classrooms of BOU. 94% (28% strongly agree and 66% agree) participants agree with this statement.

The instructor's main language when delivering is always English.

Table-3: CS and delivery in the class

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1%	1%	86%	12%

(Source: Survey work- Questionnaire analysis)

Table-3 shows that about 86% students disagree and 12% students strongly disagree with the fact that the instructor's main language when delivering

is always English. CS from Bangla to English or English to Bangla helps me to understand lecture properly.

Table-4: Influence of CS in making lessons more comprehensible

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
45%	36%	15%	4%

(Source: Survey work- Questionnaire analysis)

Table-4 shows that about 45% students strongly agree and 36% students agree with the fact that CS from Bangla to English or English to Bangla helps me to understand lecture properly.

The instructor frequently mixes Bangla with English in his/her lectures.

Table-5: Frequency of CS

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
38%	56%	6%	0%

(Source: Survey work- Questionnaire analysis)

Table-5 shows that about 38% students strongly agree and 56% students agree with the fact that the instructor frequently mixes Bangla with English in

his/her lectures. I like the instructor when he uses both Bangla and English while taking class.

Table-6: Feelings of the students about instructor's CS

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
20%	52%	23%	5%

(Source: Survey work- Questionnaire analysis)

This table shows that, total 72% of the students (20% Strongly agree and 52% Agree) have agreed with the fact that they feel comfortable and confident while the instructors use their mother tongue along with

English in the classroom. Teachers express them plainly while switches their code from English to Bangla or Bangla to English.

Table-7: CS works as a helpful tool for expression of meaning

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
18%	58%	22%	2%

(Source: Survey work- Questionnaire analysis)

From table-7, it is evident that total 76% (18% strongly agree, 58% Agree) students agree with the statement that teachers who switch and mix between Bangla and English in the classroom can convey meaning easily than the others. CS makes it easy for the

teachers to express themselves easily and help the students to comprehend the meaning with no difficulty.

The instructor does not have any difficulty in delivering lectures in English.

Table-8: Difficulty in delivering lecturers in English

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
37%	48%	15%	0%

(Source: Survey work- Questionnaire analysis)

This table shows that, total 75% of the students (37% strongly agree and 48% Agree) have agreed with the fact that the instructor does not have any difficulty in delivering lecturers in English.

The instructor always switches to Bangla when we do not understand the lecturers.

Table-9: Switching to Bangla while students do not understand the lecturers

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
40%	49%	10%	1%

(Source: Survey work- Questionnaire analysis)

From Table-9, it is evident that total 89 (40% strongly agree, 49% Agree) students agree with the statement that the instructor always switches to Bangla when we do not understand the lecturers. CS makes it

easy for the students to learn and understand easily and help them to comprehend the meaning easily.

I feel discouraged when the instructor uses both English and Bangla during his/ her lecturers.

Table-10: Students discourage rate regarding teachers' uses of both English and Bangla

Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
02%	8%	19%	71%

(Source: Survey work- Questionnaire analysis)

This Table shows that 71% students strongly disagreeing and 19% students disagreeing with the statement. Analysis of the data indicates that 80% of total students are welcoming CS in the classrooms.

exercise of first language during the lessons of foreign language.

It is in the light of this research that the researcher is recommending:

- Teachers of Secondary Level of Bangladesh Open University should adopt different types of teaching techniques.
- Teachers of Secondary Level of Bangladesh Open University need language training to teach effectively by using English.
- The government should come up with a suitable language policy.
- This study suggests that classroom CS is very common thus students should practice four language skills more as more.
- Students should focus on developing their communicative skills to reach the target language.
- Policy makers should think about all level of students as all ages of learners are studying at BOU Secondary Level to bring significant changes like teachers training programmes, updating syllabus and curriculum etc.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study presents the perceptions of students regarding the practice of CS in the EFL classrooms of BOU. This study also examined the functions of CS in the classroom. In order to put some implications for the language development policy makers attempted to find out the educational standards of these linguistic behaviors in English language competency of the learners.

It finds out that students generally have positive perceptions about the practice of CS in the EFL classrooms. This research indicates that the teachers are most of the times aware of students' lack of language proficiency in the class. This research also indicates that CS is unavoidable at the Secondary Level of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) as teaching and learning completely depends on language proficiency.

Students' views CS as the bridge between two languages. They believe it can promote better understanding. This study shows that CS is popular among Secondary Level BOU students. It is found that students learning skills are not sufficient to handle the present curriculum. Thus the linguistic competence of the students needs to be addressed properly. The use of CS in the secondary level BOU students is almost unavoidable. It is not possible to fully keep out the

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7. The instructor does not have any difficulty in delivering lectures in English.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Disagree e. strongly disagree
8. The instructor always switches to Bangla when we do not understand the lecturers.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Disagree e. strongly disagree
9. I feel discouraged when the instructor uses both English and Bangla during his/ her lectures.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Disagree e. strongly disagree

Appendix

1. Name:
2. Name of your school:

Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions

1. Switching of English (TL) and Bangla (L1) language is a common phenomenon in the EFL classrooms I have attended.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Disagree e. strongly disagree
2. The instructor's main language when delivering is always English
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Disagree e. strongly disagree
3. CS from Bangla to English or English to Bangla helps me to understand lecture properly.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Disagree e. strongly disagree
4. The instructor frequently mixes Bangla with English in his/her lectures.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Disagree e. strongly disagree
5. I like the instructor when he uses both Bangla and English while taking class.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Disagree e. strongly disagree
6. Teachers express them plainly while switches their code from English to Bangla or Bangla to English.
a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Disagree e. strongly disagree